

## LECTURES ON ARCHITECTURE AND ANTIQUITIES.\*



Temple at Tentyn, Upper Egypt.

## LECTURE II.

DIONYSIUS SICULUS, who wrote 50 B.C., thus describes Babylon:—"Semiramis, who was naturally of an aspiring spirit, and ambitious to excel all her predecessors in glorious actions, employed all her thoughts about the building of Babylon, and having provided architects, artificers, and all other necessaries for the undertaking, she employed two millions of men in building of the city. It was so erected, that the river Euphrates ran through the middle of it; it was surrounded by a wall 360 furlongs in circuit, and adorned with many stately towers, and such was the state and grandeur of the work, that the walls were of that breadth as that six chariots abreast might be driven together upon them. The height was such as exceeded all men's belief that heard of it, as Ctesias relates; but Clitarchus and those who went afterwards over with Alexander into Asia, have written that the walls were 365 furlongs, the queen making them of that compass that the furlongs should be as many as the days of the year. They were of brick, cemented with bitumen, in height, as Ctesias says, 300 feet, but as some of the later writers report, but 75 only, and that the breadth was but enough for two chariots abreast. There were 250 turrets, in height and thickness proportionable to the largeness of the wall. Between the wall and the houses there was a space of 200 feet. That the work might be more easily despatched, to each of her friends was allotted a furlong, with an allowance of all expenses necessary for their several parts, and commanded that all should be finished in a year's time, which being diligently perfected with the queen's approbation, she then made a bridge at the narrowest part of the river five furlongs in length. She built likewise two palaces, one at each end of the bridge on the bank of the river." The wall of one palace was 60 furlongs in circumference, and of the other 30, both of "well-burnt bricks," and it appears from Diodorus that a tunnel communication was made between the two palaces. "The river was turned aside into a reservoir, and a vault (15 feet broad, and) 12 feet high to the springing of the arch) built across the old bed; the stream was then suffered to flow over the work to its old channel. She made likewise two brazen gates at either end of the vault, which continued to the time of the Persian empire. In the middle of the city she built a temple to

Jupiter, whom the Babylonians call Belus, of which, since writers differ among themselves, and the work is now wholly decayed, there is nothing that can be related with certainty concerning it, yet it is apparent that it was of exceeding great height, and that by advantage of it the Chaldean astrologers exactly observed the rising and setting of the stars. The whole was built of brick cemented with bitumen, with great art and cost. On the top were placed three statues of beaten gold, of Jupiter, Juno, and Rhea, with other splendid vessels, tables, and ornaments of gold and precious stones, weighing altogether about six Babylonian talents. But all these the Persian king sacrilegiously carried away, and length of time has either altogether consumed, or so much defaced the palaces, and the other structures, that at this day but a small part of this Babylon is inhabited, and the greatest part which lay within the walls is turned to pasture and tillage." (Diod. Sic. b. ii. c. 3.) We will now take the account which Herodotus gives of the temple of Belus: he states the square of the base at two stadia, or 1,000 feet, and adds, "in the midst a tower rises of the solid depth and height of one stadium (or 500 feet), upon which resting, as upon a base, seven other turrets are built in regular succession. The ascent is on the outside, which winding from the ground is continued to the highest tower, and in the midst of the whole structure there is a convenient resting-place. In the last tower is a large chapel, in which is placed a couch magnificently adorned, and near it is a table of solid gold, but there is no statue in the place." (Clio. 181.)

Strabo says that the sepulchre of Belus was a pyramid of one stadium in height, whose base was a square of like dimension, and that it was ruined by Xerxes. Arrian agrees in this particular, and both these writers say that Alexander wished to restore it, but that he found it too great a labour, for it is said that ten thousand men were not able to remove the rubbish in two months. Arrian calls it a stupendous and wonderful fabric, and states that it stood in the heart of the city. On the top of this wonderful pile was the statue of Belus 40 feet high, but which only appeared of the size of life from below. As a guide by which we may form an idea of the loftiness of this tower, it may be mentioned that the highest building in England is Salisbury Cathedral, whose spire is 404 feet high. (St. Paul's is about 368 feet high.) The statue of Belus will bring to mind one which far exceeded it, viz. the golden image set up in the plain of Dura by Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel iii. 1), which was 60 cubits high (105 feet).

Though Semiramis built on largely in Babylon, yet Nebuchadnezzar so enlarged and beautified it, that he may be said to have built it anew, and his therefore is the city whose

great circuit is given by ancient writers varying from 45 to 60 miles. To this glorious city the king is made to allude in the pride of his heart: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Dan. iv. 30.) In fact, Babylon was more like a province walled in than a mere city, and we are not to suppose that it was all built upon, for a great part was devoted to raise corn; and in all eastern cities gardens mostly surround the houses, which therefore occupy but a small proportion of the area of the city. Among the wonders of the world were ranked the famous hanging gardens, which were raised by Nebuchadnezzar to gratify his wife Amytis, the daughter of Astages, king of Media. Quintus Curtius makes them 50 feet high. They were raised on pillars and contained a square of 400 feet each side, and were carried up into the air on several terraces laid one above another, and the ascent from terrace to terrace was by stairs 10 feet wide. A wall 22 feet in thickness surrounded the fabric. The floors of each of the terraces were laid in the following manner; on the top of the pillars were first placed large flat stones, 16 feet long and four broad, and over them was a layer of reed, mixed with a great quantity of bitumen, over which were two rows of bricks closely cemented together by plaster, and over all were thick sheets of lead, and lastly upon the lead was laid the mould of the garden. On the upper terrace there was an aqueduct or engine, by which water was drawn up out of the river for watering the garden.

We have seen the glories, the magnificence, the splendour of ancient Babylon, from which we may form some conjecture as to the wealth and power of her monarchs. But it appears that their pride, oppression, and impiety were equal to their power (Isaiah xiv.), and therefore it is that we find some of the most terrific denunciations uttered against this city that are recorded in Scripture; we will consider them here, and then see how completely, how triumphantly they are fulfilled in the appearance which modern Babylon displays to the traveller. The prophet Isaiah (ch. xlii. 19) says, "Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, it shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation, neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there, neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the island shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces." Again, in the 14th chap., v. 23, "I will make it also a possession for the bittern, and pools of water; and I will sweep it with the broom of destruction, saith the Lord."

\* For her cruel oppression of other nations, Babylon is emphatically styled by the Prophet "the hammer of the whole earth." (Jerem. li. 26.)

† In this dimension probably the pedestal is included, otherwise the statue would be out of proportion to the walls.

‡ In the days of St. Jerome it was turned into a park for the kings of Persia to hunt in.